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# Why I Am Not a Hindu

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I have read and admired Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*. On the other hand, I have also read and disagreed with M.K.Gandhi's *Why I Am a Hindu*. My acquaintance with these writings has inspired me to write this essay explaining why I am not a Hindu, though I was born in a Hindu family.

## The Meaning of "Hindu"

The word "Hindu" is a much-abused word in the sense that it has been used to mean different things at different times. For example, some people even now, at least some times, use the word "Hindu" as a synonym for "Indian". In this sense of the term, I am certainly a "Hindu" because I do not deny being an Indian. However, I do not think that this a proper use of the term "Hindu". There are many Indians such as Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as well as rationalists, humanists and atheists who do not call themselves "Hindu" and also do not like to be described as such. It is certainly not fair to convert them into Hinduism by giving an elastic definition of the term "Hindu". Besides, it is also not advisable to use the word "Hindu" in this sense from the point of view of clarity. The word "Hindu" may have been used in the beginning as a synonym for "Indian" [1], but, at present, the word is used for people with certain definite religious beliefs. The word "Hindu" belongs to the category of words like "Muslim", "Christian", "Buddhist" and "Jain" and not to the category of words like "American", "British", "Australian", "Chinese" or "Japanese". **There are, in fact, many Indians who are not Hindus, and on the other hand, there are many Hindus who are not Indians**, for example, those who are citizens of Nepal, Sri Lanka and some other countries.

In the religious sense, the word, "Hindu" is often used broadly to include Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in addition to those who are described as "Hindu" in this most restricted sense of the term, that is, the adherents of Vedic or Brahmin religion. For example, the expression "Hindu" is used in the Hindu law not only for those who are Hindu by religion but also for persons who are Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs by religion. This, again, is too broad a definition of "Hindu". If we consistently use the word "Hindu" in this sense, we will have to say that Japan is a Hindu country!

The above definition of "Hindu" is clearly inadequate from a philosophical point of view. Buddhism and Jainism, for instance, explicitly reject the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas and the system of *varna-vyavastha*, which are fundamental to Hinduism, that is, if the term "Hinduism" is used in its most restricted sense. Therefore, clubbing together Buddhists and Jains or even Sikhs with those who believe in the infallibility of the Vedas and subscribe to the *varna-vyavastha* is nothing but an invitation to confusion.

Though I agree with Buddhism in its rejection of god, soul, infallibility of the Vedas and the *varna-vyavastha*, still I am not a Hindu even in this broad sense of the term "Hindu", because as a rationalist and humanist I reject all religions including Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. However, in this essay I am concerned with explaining why I am not a Hindu in the most appropriate sense of the term "Hindu", that is, the sense in which a person is a Hindu if his religion is Hinduism in the restricted sense of the term "Hinduism". In this restricted sense of "Hinduism", Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are excluded from its scope. I also maintain that this is, at present, probably the most popular sense of the term, and every body should, in the interest of clarity, confine its use, as far as possible, to this sense only, at least in philosophical discourse.

Radhakrishnan, for example, has used the term "Hindu" and "Hinduism" in this restricted sense when he says in his *The Hindu View of Life* that, "The chief sacred scriptures of Hindus, the Vedas register the intuitions of the perfected souls." [2] Or, when he says that "Hinduism is the religion not only of the Vedas but of the Epics and the Puranas." [3]

## Basic Beliefs of Hinduism

Gandhi, too, has used the term "Hindu" in this restricted sense, when writing in *Young India* in October, 1921, he says:

I call myself a *sanatani* Hindu, because,

1. I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avatars* and rebirth.
2. I believe in the *Varnashram dharma* in a sense in my opinion strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense.
3. I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular.
4. I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. [4]

One may be tempted to ask, at this point, whether all the beliefs listed by Gandhi are really fundamental to Hinduism. In my opinion, (I) the belief in the authenticity of the Vedas and (II) the belief in the *varnashram dharma* are more basic to Hinduism than the belief in cow-protection and idol-worship. [5]

Though it cannot be denied that, in spite of attempts by reformers like Kabir, Rammohan Roy and Dayanand Saraswati, idol-worship is still practiced widely by the Hindu masses, and there is, at present, a taboo on eating beef among a large number of Hindus. In any case, I am in a position to establish the fact of my not being a Hindu by asserting the contradictory of each of the above statements made by Gandhi:

In other words, I assert that I am not a Hindu, because,

1. I do not believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avatars* and rebirth.

2. I do not believe in the *varnashram dharma* or *varna-vyavastha* either in the sense in which it is explained in Hindu *dharma shastras* like *Manusmriti* or in the so-called Vedic sense.
3. I do not believe in the Hindu taboo of not eating beef.
4. I disbelieve in idol-worship.

However, while explaining why I am not a Hindu, I will concentrate mainly on (I) the belief in the authenticity of the Vedas, and (II) the *varnashram dharma*, which I consider more fundamental to Hinduism. Besides, in the concluding section of the essay, I will briefly discuss *moksha*, which is regarded as the highest end of life in Hinduism, and some other Hindu doctrines like *karmavada* and *avatarvada*.

## The infallibility of the Vedas

First of all, let me explain what do I mean by saying that "I do not believe in the Vedas", and why I do not do so.

The schools of ancient Indian thought are generally classified by orthodox Hindu thinkers into two broad categories, namely, orthodox (*astika*) and heterodox (*nastika*). The six main Hindu systems of thought -- Mimamsa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika -- are regarded as orthodox (*astika*), not because they believe in the existence of god, but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. [6]

Out of the six orthodox systems of Hindu thought, Nyaya system is primarily concerned with the conditions of correct thinking and the means of acquiring true knowledge. According to Nyaya system, there are four distinct and separate sources of knowledge, namely, (i) perception (ii) inference (iii) comparison, and (iv) testimony or *shabda*.

*Shabda*, which is defined in the Nyaya system as "valid verbal testimony" is further classified into (i) the scriptural (*vaidika*), and (ii) the secular (*laukika*). **Vaidika or scriptural testimony is believed to be the word of god, and therefore, it is regarded as perfect and infallible**. [7]

Mimamsa or Purva Mimamsa, another orthodox Hindu system is "the outcome of the ritualistic side of the vedic culture". However, in its attempt to justify the authority of the Vedas, Mimamsa elaborately discusses different sources of valid knowledge. Naturally enough, among the various "sources of valid knowledge", Mimamsa pays greatest attention to testimony or authority, which, too, is regarded by it as a valid source of knowledge. There are, according to Mimamsa, two kinds of authority -- personal (*paurusheya*) and impersonal (*apaurusheya*). The authority of the Vedas is regarded by Mimamsa as impersonal. [8]

As mentioned earlier, according to Nyaya, the authority of the Vedas is derived from their being the words of god. But Mimamsa, which does not believe in the existence of god, declares that the Vedas like the world, are eternal. They are not the work of any person, human or divine. The infallibility of the authority of the Vedas, according to Mimamsa, rests on the "fact" that they are not vitiated by any defect to which the work of imperfect persons is liable. [9]

Thus, orthodox Hindu schools like Nyaya and Mimamsa regard the testimony of the Vedas as infallible, though they give different reasons for doing so. Well-known orthodox Hindu theologians like Shankar and Ramanuja believed in the authority of the Vedas. *Manusmriti*, too, upholds the infallibility of the Vedas. As pointed out by S.N.Dasgupta, "The validity and authority of the Vedas were acknowledged by all Hindu writers and

they had wordy battles over it with the Buddhists who denied it." [\[10\]](#)

The point worth noting is that though popularly Hinduism is a theistic religion, **it is not essential to believe in the existence of god for being an orthodox Hindu -- belief in the authority of the Vedas is more important.**

When I say, "I do not believe in the Vedas", what I mean is that **I do not regard the testimony of the Vedas as a valid source of knowledge.** In other words when I say, "I do not believe in the Vedas", I do not mean that each and every proposition contained in the Vedas is false. It is quite possible that one may find a few true statements in the Vedas after great amount of patient research. But I assert that the truth or the falsity of a proposition is logically independent of its being contained or not contained in the Vedas. A proposition is true if there is a correspondence between the belief expressed by it and the facts. Otherwise, it is false. So, a proposition contained in the Vedas might be true, that is, if there is a correspondence between the belief expressed by it and the facts, but it is, I insist, not true **because** it is contained in the Vedas. I categorically reject as invalid every argument of the form: "The proposition P is contained in the Vedas. **Therefore**, the proposition P is true".

Besides, I also assert that some propositions contained in the Vedas are certainly false. For example, according to *Purusha-Sukta* of *Rig Veda*, *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* originated respectively from the mouth, hands, thighs and feet of the *purusha* or the creator. I categorically reject this statement as false. I maintain that *varna-vyavastha* is a man-made social institution and it has nothing to do with the alleged creator of this world.

I also reject both the reasons put forward in support of the infallibility of the Vedas. I neither regard them to be "the words of god" nor I consider them to be eternal and impersonal. I believe that Vedas were conceived, spoken and written by human beings. The question of their being "words of god" simply does not arise, because there are no good reasons for believing in the existence of god. The existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent god is totally inconsistent with the presence of suffering and evil in this world. It is impossible for god to exist. [\[11\]](#)

Similarly, Vedas could not have come into existence before human beings appeared on this earth, and before Sanskrit language came into existence. And there are no good reasons for believing that Sanskrit language came into existence even before human beings appeared on this earth!

As far as Gandhi is concerned, though he liked to describe himself as a *sanatani* Hindu, he was, in fact, not a completely orthodox Hindu. For example, in the article quoted earlier in this essay Gandhi goes on to add, "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. **I believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend-Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas.** My belief in the Hindu scriptures **does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired**, I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned in may be, **if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense.**" [\[12\]](#)(emphasis mine)

I seriously doubt that this position will be acceptable to an orthodox Hindu. In fact, Gandhi's position comes very close to that of rationalists and humanists when he says that "I decline to be bound by any interpretation however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason and moral sense". However, since he refused to say in so many words that he did not believe in the authority of the Vedas, Gandhi may be described, in my opinion, as a liberal Hindu with an eclectic approach towards religion. On the other hand, my position is radically different from that of Gandhi, because I do not consider either the Vedas or the Bible, the Koran and Zend-Avesta or any other book to be divinely inspired.

## ***Varna-vyavastha***

Before discussing *varna-vyavastha* or *varnashram dharma*, let me clarify in the very beginning that I am not interested in giving my own interpretation of what *varna-vyavastha* is or ought to be in its ideal form. I am interested, firstly, in giving an objective exposition of *varna-vyavastha* as contained in recognized Hindu scriptures like Vedas and *dharmashastras* like *Manusmriti*; and secondly, in mentioning my reasons for rejecting *varna-vyavastha*. In doing so I will concentrate on the *chaturvarnya* (four-fold division of society) aspect of *varna-vyavastha*.

We have already noted that the first reference to *varna* (class based on birth or caste) is to be found in the *Purusha-Sukta* of the *Rig Veda*. The reference to the four *ashrams* or stages of life, namely, *Brahmcharya*, *Garhastya*, *Vanprashtha* and *Sanyas* is to be found in the Upanishads. These are, in their turn, related to the four *purusarthas* or ends of life, namely, *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (satisfaction of sensual desires) and *moksha* (liberation). Out of these, the Upanishads attach maximum value to *sanyas ashram* and *moksha purusartha*, which is regarded as the highest end of life. [\[13\]](#)

The system of *varnashram dharma* is upheld by popular Hindu scriptures like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagvat-Gita*. In *Ramayana*, for example, Ram kills Shambuka simply because he was performing *tapasya* (ascetic exercises) which he was not supposed to do as he was a *Shudra* by birth. [\[14\]](#)

Similarly, in *Mahabharata*, Dronacharya refuses to teach archery to Eklavya, because he was not a *Kshatriya* by birth. When Eklavya, treating Drona as his notional guru, learns archery on his own, Drona makes him cut his right thumb as *gurudakshina* (gift for the teacher) so that he may not become a better archer than his favorite *Kshatriya* student Arjuna!

The much-glorified *Bhagvat-Gita*, too, favors *varna-vyavastha*.[\[15\]](#) When Arjuna refuses to fight, one of his main worries was that the war would lead to the birth of *varna-sankaras* or offspring from intermixing of different *varnas* and the consequent "downfall" of the family. [\[16\]](#) On the other hand, Krishna tries to motivate Arjuna to fight by saying that it was his *varna-dharma* (caste-duty) to do so because he was a *Kshatriya*. In fact, Krishna goes to the extent of claiming that the four *varnas* were created by him only. [\[17\]](#) Thus, Arjuna's main problem was being born a *Kshatriya*. Had he been a *Brahmin* or a *Vaishya* or a *Shudra* by birth, he would have been spared the trouble of fighting a destructive war. Even the much-applauded doctrine of *niskama karma* is nothing but an exhortation to faithfully perform one's *varnashram dharma* in a disinterested manner. [\[18\]](#)

The celebrated orthodox Hindu theologian Shankar, too, was a supporter of *varna-vyavastha*. According to him, *Shudras* are not entitled to philosophical knowledge. [\[19\]](#) However, the most elaborate exposition of *varnashram dharma* is to be found in *Manusmriti*, an important *dharmashastra* of Hindus. Let us turn to it in order to have a close look at the *varna-vyavastha*.

## ***Manusmriti***

In the very first chapter of *Manusmriti*, it is clearly stated that *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* were created by *Brahma* (creator of this world) from his mouth, hands, thighs and feet respectively. [\[20\]](#)

Manu claims that the same *Brahma*, who created this world, also created *Manusmriti* and taught it to him. [21]

The duties of the different *varnas* are also mentioned in the *Manusmriti*. The *Brahmins* were created for teaching, studying, performing *yajnas* (ceremonial sacrifices), getting *yajnas* performed, giving and accepting *dan* (gifts). [22] The *Kshatriyas* were created for protecting the citizens, giving gifts, getting *yajnas* performed and studying. [23] The *Vaishyas* were created for protecting animals, giving gifts, getting *yajnas* performed, studying, trading, lending money on interest and doing agricultural work. [24] The *Shudras* were created by *Brahma* for serving *Brahmins* and the other two *varnas* without being critical of them. [25]

It is interesting to note that studying, getting *yajnas* performed and giving gifts or charity are common duties of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*; whereas teaching, accepting gifts and performing *yajnas* are reserved exclusively for *Brahmins*. The *Shudras*, of course, are denied the rights to study, getting *yajnas* performed by *Brahmins* or even giving gifts to them.

*Manusmriti* further states that having originated from the mouth of *Brahma*, being elder and being the repository of the Vedas; *Brahmins* are the masters of the entire universe. [26] Besides, *Brahmins* alone act as a sort of post office for transmitting food to the gods and the dead, that is to say, the gods and the dead eat food through the mouths of *Brahmins* (apparently because they do not have mouths of their own). Therefore, no one can be superior to *Brahmins*. [27] All others are said to enjoy everything owing to the *Brahmins'* mercy. [28] The *Manusmriti* clearly states that *Brahmins* alone are entitled to teach this *dharmashastra* and none else. [29]

*Manusmriti* refers to the Vedas, which are to be regarded as the main valid source of knowledge about *dharma*, as *shruti* and to *dharmashastras* as *smriti*. No one is to argue critically about them because religion has originated from them. [30] Any *nastika* (non-believer) or critic of the Vedas, who "insults" them on the basis of logic, is worthy of being socially boycotted by "noble" persons. [31]

In short, the main features of *chaturvarnya* as elaborated in the *Manusmriti* are as follows:

1. Division of Hindu society into four *varnas* on the basis of birth. Out of these only the first three, namely, *Brahmins*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*, who are collectively known as *dwija* (twice-born) are entitled to *upanayan* and the study of the Vedas. *Shudras* as well as women of *dwija varnas* are denied the right to study.
2. Assigning different duties and occupations for different *varnas*. This is to be enforced strictly by the king. [32] According to *Manusmriti*, if a person of lower caste adopts the occupation of a higher caste, the king ought to deprive him of all his property and expel him from his kingdom. [33]
3. Treating *Brahmins* as superior and other *varnas*, namely, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* as inferior to him in descending order with the *Shudra* occupying the bottom of the hierarchy. A *Brahmin* is to be treated as god and respected even if he is ignorant. Even a hundred-year old *Kshatriya* is to treat a ten year old *Brahmin* as his father. [34] *Brahmin* alone is entitled to teach. If a *Shudra* dares to give moral lessons to a *Brahmin*, the king is to get him punished by pouring hot oil in his ear and mouth. [35] Similarly, if a *Shudra* occupies the same seat as a *Brahmin*, he is to be punished by branding his waist (with hot rod) or getting his buttocks cut! [36]
4. Treating women as unequal. Women, that is, even women belonging to *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya varna* are not entitled to *upanayan* and

the study of the Vedas. For them, marriage is equivalent to *upanayan* and service of their husbands is equivalent to the study of the Vedas in the *gurukul*.[\[37\]](#)

Even if the husband is morally degraded, engaged in an affair with another woman and is devoid of knowledge and other qualities, the wife must treat him like a god. [\[38\]](#) A widower is allowed to remarry but a widow is not. [\[39\]](#) Besides, women are not considered fit for being free and independent. They are to be protected in their childhood by father, in youth by husband and in old age by son. [\[40\]](#) They should never be allowed by their guardians to act independently. [\[41\]](#) A woman must never do anything even inside her home without the consent of her father, husband and son respectively. [\[42\]](#) She must remain in control of her father in childhood, of husband in youth and of son after the death of her husband. [\[43\]](#)

5. Treating different *varnas* as unequal for legal purposes. The Hindu law as codified by Manu is based on the principle of inequality. The punishment for a particular crime is not same for all *varnas*. In fact, the punishment varies depending on the *varna* of the victim as well as the *varna* of the person committing the crime. For the same crime, the *Brahmin* is to be given a mild punishment, whereas the *Shudra* is to be given the harshest punishment of all. Similarly, if the victim of a crime is a *Shudra*, the punishment is mild, and the punishment is harsh in case the victim is a *Brahmin*. For example, if a *Brahmin* is awarded death sentence, it is sufficient to shave his head, but *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra* are to actually die. [\[44\]](#) If a *Kshatriya*, a *Vaishya*, or a *Shudra* repeatedly gives false evidence in the court, he is to be punished and expelled from the kingdom, whereas the *Brahmin* is not to be punished, he is to be only expelled. [\[45\]](#) If a person has sexual intercourse with a consenting women of his own *varna*, he is not to be punished. [\[46\]](#) But if a person of lower *varna* has sexual intercourse with a woman of higher *varna*, with or without her consent, he is to be killed. [\[47\]](#) If a *Brahmin* forces a *dwija* to work for him, he is to be punished. [\[48\]](#) But if a *Brahmin* forces a *Shudra* to work for him, whether by making or not making payments to him, he is not to be punished, because *Shudras* have been created only for serving *Brahmins*.[\[49\]](#) If a *Brahmin* abuses a *Shudra*, he is to be fined mildly, [\[50\]](#) but if a *Shudra* abuses a *Brahmin*, he is to be killed. [\[51\]](#) On the other hand, even if a *Brahmin* kills a *Shudra*, he is merely to perform penance by killing a cat, frog, owl or crow, etc. [\[52\]](#) Thus a *Shudra* is to be killed for abusing a *Brahmin*, whereas a *Brahmin* is to be let off lightly even if he kills a *Shudra*. Such is the unequal justice of *Manusmriti*.

In fact, this system of graded inequality seems to be the very essence of the *varna-vyavastha*. Whether it is the choice of names, [\[53\]](#) or the manner of greeting, [\[54\]](#) or the mode of entertaining guests, [\[55\]](#) or the method of administering oath in the court, [\[56\]](#) or the process of taking out the funeral procession, [\[57\]](#)

at each and every step in life, from birth to death, this system of graded inequality is to be applied and observed. Manu does not even spare the rates of interest on loan. For borrowing the same amount, *Kshatriya* has to pay more as interest than *Brahmin*, *Vaishya* more than *Kshatriya* and the poor *Shudra* has to pay the maximum amount as interest! [\[58\]](#)

6. Prohibiting inter-marriage between different *varnas*. According to *Manusmriti*, a *dwija* ought to marry a woman of his own *varna*.[\[59\]](#) A woman of the same *varna* is considered best for the first marriage. However, a *dwija* may take a woman of inferior *varna* as his second wife if he is overcome by sexual passion. [\[60\]](#) But Manu strongly disapproves of *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* taking a *Shudra* woman even as their second wife. They become *Shudra* if they do so. [\[61\]](#)

7. Supporting untouchability is also a part of the scheme of social stratification outlined in the *Manusmriti*. Manu clearly mentions that *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*, collectively known as *dwija* and the *Shudras* are the four *varnas*. There is no fifth *varna*.[\[62\]](#) He explains the origin of other castes by saying that they are *varna-sankara* castes, that is to say, castes originating due to the intermixture of different *varnas*, both in *anuloma* (upper *varna* male and lower *varna* female) and *pratiloma* (lower *varna* male and upper *varna* female) manner. [\[63\]](#) For example, *Nishad*

caste is said to have originated from *anuloma* relationship between *Brahmin* male and *Shudra* female,[\[64\]](#) whereas *C handala* caste is said to be owing its origin to *pratiloma* relationship between *Shudra* male and *Brahmin* female. [\[65\]](#)

Manu seems to be disapproving of *pratiloma* relationship more than the *anuloma*, because he describes *C handalas* as the lowest of the low castes. [\[66\]](#)

Let us see what *Manusmriti*, has to say about the *C handala*. The *Chandala*, says *Manusmriti*, must not ever reside inside the village. While doing their work, they must reside outside the village, at cremation ground, on mountains or in groves. They are not entitled to keep cows or horses, etc., as pet animals. They may keep dogs and donkeys. They are to wear shrouds. They are to eat in broken utensils. They are to use ornaments of iron, not of gold. They must keep moving from one place to another, not residing at the same place for a long duration. [\[67\]](#) They must not move around in villages and cities in night hours. They may enter the villages and cities in daytime, with king's permission, wearing special symbols (to enable identification), and take away unclaimed dead bodies. [\[68\]](#)

Moreover, how is the "religious" person to deal with the *Chandala*? He must not have any social intercourse (marriage, interdining, etc.) with them. He must not talk to or even see them! [\[69\]](#) He may ask servants (apparently *Shudras*) to give them food in broken utensils. [\[70\]](#)

8. Granting divine and religious sanction to *varna-vyavastha*. Manu gives divine and religious sanction to the *varna-vyavastha* by claiming divine origin for the *varnas* as well as for the *Manusmriti* and demanding unquestioning obedience of it.

So, that completes my exposition of the *varna-vyavastha*. I want to emphasize in particular that my exposition does not contain any exaggeration at all. The reader may check each and every statement by comparing with the original *Manusmriti* in order to satisfy himself or herself. I cannot help if the system is so unjust and so out of tune with out existing values that even an objective exposition reads like a severe condemnation. Nevertheless, I will now turn to my reasons for rejecting *varna-vyavastha*: I reject *varna-vyavastha* because it is irrational, unjust and undemocratic, being opposed to the democratic and human values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

## Criticism of varna-vyavastha

The *varna-vyavastha*

is opposed to the value of liberty as it denies the freedom to choose one's occupation and marriage partner to one and all. Everyone must join the occupation of his *varna* and must marry within his *varna*. Similarly, it denies the freedom to study to the *Shudras* and woman in particular. Even the *dwija* must study the Vedas before he studies anything else. Otherwise, he becomes a *Shudra*.[\[71\]](#) (Incidentally, according to *Manusmriti*, there are several ways by which a *Brahmin* or *dwija* may become a *Shudra* but there is no way by which a *Shudra* may become a *Brahmin*. A *Shudra* must always remain a *Shudra*.)[\[72\]](#)

What is worse, the *Chandala* is even denied the freedom to reside at a place of his choice or to wear clothes and ornaments of his choice. He is not even free to keep pet animals of his choice.

The conflict between *varna-vyavastha* and the value of equality is more than obvious. As I mentioned earlier, the system of graded inequality

seems to be the very essence of *varna-vyavastha*. It denies equal respect to all in society. It denies equality before law. It denies equal access to marriage partners. It denies equal access to jobs. The occupation of teachers and priests, for example, is reserved exclusively for *Brahmins*. Finally, it also denies equal access to education and knowledge.

A *Brahmin*, according to Manu, must not teach the *Shudra* and woman even if he dies with his knowledge without imparting it to anybody. [73] On the other hand, if anyone studies the Vedas on his own he or she will go straight to hell. [74] In other words, cent percent reservations for *dwija* males in the sphere of education.

The *varna-vyavastha* is most unfair to the *Shudras* and the untouchables. They are denied respect, knowledge, power and wealth. They are denied access to occupations considered respectable, just as they are denied access to men and women of upper *varnas* for marriage. The *Shudras* are virtually reduced to being slaves of the *Brahmins* in particular and the *dwijas* in general, whereas the untouchables are regarded as outcast -- beyond the pale of the society. The women are generally treated as sexual objects and as unfit for being independent and free.

As far as fraternity is considered, we must not expect it to exist in a society, which is so unequal and unjust. A *Shudra's* waist is to be branded or his buttocks are to be cut only because he occupies the same seat as the *Brahmin*. The "religious" are not to talk or even look at a *Chandala*. Inter-marriage is prohibited. Manu seems to be most eager to prevent inter-mixing of the *varnas*. Thus, the Hindu social order is based on the isolation and exclusiveness of the *varnas*.

#### The *Manusmriti*

not only outlines a totally undemocratic and unjust social system but also gives divine, religious sanction to this man-made social institution of *chaturvarnya*. Some Hindus, including apparently learned "thinkers" and writers, smugly wax eloquent about Hinduism being the most tolerant and liberal religion of the world.

Is there any other religion, which sanctions slavery and untouchability? Is there any other religion in which only persons born in a particular caste ( *Brahmin*) are entitled to become priests?

Slavery is not peculiar to India or to Hinduism, but carrying it to the extremes of untouchability, and granting it divine and religious sanction is peculiar to Hinduism.

Similarly, some Hindus may be tolerant, just as some of them are intolerant, but Hinduism or Hindu religion is not tolerant at all, either socially or intellectually. *Manusmriti*, for example, clearly says that anybody who argues critically and logically about *dharmashastras* ought to be ostracized. [75]

Non-believers, including freethinkers, rationalists and Buddhists, are not to be entertained respectfully as guests; though, mercifully, they may be given food. [76] The families of non-believers are destroyed sooner than later according to Manu. [77] A state with a large number of *Shudras* and *nastikas* soon meets its destruction. [78] *Manusmriti* is full of abusive epithets for freethinkers and non-believers. The unorthodox ( *nastikas*) are sometimes equated with the *Shudras*, sometimes with the *Chandalas*, sometimes with thieves and sometimes with lunatics! [79] Such is the generosity of Hindu *dharma*.

## Apologies for varna-vyavastha

Let me now consider what the apologists of *varna-vyavastha* have to say in its defense.

A standard defense of *varna-vyavastha* is to say that it is a system of division of labor. It is easy to grant that division of labor is essential for any complex society, but it is equally easy to see that *varna-vyavastha* is not a system of division of labor based on aptitude and capability. It is a system of division of labor **based on birth**. Besides, it has other associated features such as feeling of superiority and inferiority, inequality before law, denial of equal access to knowledge and prohibition against inter-marriage.

What have these features to do with the division of labor?

Division of labor is found in all societies, but *varna-vyavastha* is not. Thus, trying to justify *varna-vyavastha* as division of labor is a futile exercise.

Another standard defense of the *varna-vyavastha* is to say that the system was originally based on aptitude and capability. Whether it was actually ever so is a subject for historical research. Most probably, the racial theory of the origin of castes is true. However, even if we grant for the sake of argument that the *varna-vyavastha* was originally based on aptitude and capability, how does it help? We cannot say that **because** the system was originally, some time in remote past, based on aptitude and capability; **therefore** we ought to gladly suffer the present system based on birth. It hardly makes any sense at all!

In any case, *Manusmriti* was most probably written between 200 BC and 200 AD [80] and the system as outlined in it is totally based on birth. Gautam Buddha, who lived in sixth century BC, challenged the infallibility of the Vedas as well as the *varna-vyavastha*. There are several passages in *Tripitaka*, mainly in *Digha Nikaya* and *Majjhima Nikaya* which are "directed against the claims of the Brahmans to be of different origin from the rest of humanity, born from the mouth of Brahma, having a hereditary prerogative to teach, guide and spiritually govern the rest of the society." [81] In *Majjhima Nikaya* Buddha is quoted as refuting *varna-vyavastha* on several occasions. According to Buddha, it is unreasonable to decide one's place and functions in society on the basis of one's birth in a caste. Buddha is also quoted as insisting that in the eyes of the law all persons ought to be treated as equal, irrespective of the caste or *varna* in which he or she is born. [82] Thus, it is obvious that even if the system of *varna-vyavastha* ever existed in its ideal form -- which is doubtful -- it had already degenerated by the time of Buddha, that is, about 2500 years back.

The most blatant defense of *varna-vyavastha*, however, is to say that human beings are born unequal, and, therefore, it is natural and normal for children to join the occupation of their fathers. Surprisingly and sadly, no less a person than Gandhi defended *varna-vyavastha* in a similar manner.

To quote Gandhi: "I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations, the law of *varna* admitted of no distinction of high and low; on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labors and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbor. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be

evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to". [\[83\]](#)

Again, "I regard *Varnashrama* as a healthy division of work based on birth. The present ideas of caste are a perversion of the original. There is no question with me of superiority or inferiority. It is purely a question of duty. I have indeed stated that *varna* is based on birth. But I have also said that it is possible for a *shudra*, for instance, to become a *vaishya*. But in order to perform the *duty* of *vaishya* he does not need the label of a *vaishya*. He who performs the duty of a *brahman* will easily become one in the next incarnation." [\[84\]](#)

So, *varna-vyavastha*, according to Gandhi, is a "healthy division of work based on birth", which takes into account the "natural tendencies" of human beings and avoids "unworthy competition."

This apparently plausible defense of *varna-vyavastha* is, in fact, most unscientific. It is a well-known and scientifically verified fact that **acquired** characteristics are not inherited biologically, only genetic qualities are transmitted from one generation to another. For instance, carpentry is an acquired characteristic; just as knowledge of philosophy is an acquired quality. Neither a carpenter's son or daughter is born with the knowledge of carpentry, nor is a philosopher's daughter or son born with the knowledge of philosophy. These are acquired characteristics and, therefore, they cannot be inherited biologically. If sometimes, though not always, a carpenter's son becomes a good carpenter or a philosopher's daughter acquires a good knowledge of philosophy, without being formally initiated into these disciplines, it is **not because they are born with the required knowledge, but only because of the favorable environment at home**, which enables them to acquire these characteristics. The result could be different if their places were to be interchanged.

One may say that though the knowledge of carpentry or philosophy is not inherited biologically, the mental qualities enabling one to acquire the requisite knowledge is inherited. Some physical and mental qualities are, no doubt, inherited but this does not mean that parents and their children are always identical in physical or mental qualities. It is a well known fact -- anybody can verify this by careful observation -- that due to different permutations and combinations of chromosomes and genes offspring of same parents are not always identical to one another or to their parents. More often than not, they are different. For instance, one son or daughter of same parents may be tall and another short. The colors of skin, hair and eyes may differ likewise. What is true of physical characteristics is equally true of mental qualities. Thus, a child may or may not have the mental characteristics, which his father has.

Therefore, **it is totally unscientific to forcefully restrict children to the occupations of their forefathers.**

It is true that all human beings are not equal in the sense of being **identical** in physical or mental qualities. But it does not follow from this that they ought to be denied equal opportunity to join a vocation of their choice or that they ought to be denied equality before law or equal respect as human beings in the society.

As for "unworthy" competition, how do we know that the competition is unworthy unless all are, to begin with, given equal opportunity? Take the example of Gandhi himself. He was a *bania* by caste. Yet, in spite of some serious aberrations such as supporting *varna-vyavastha* based on birth and linking politics with religion, he performed fairly well in the role of a national leader. It would have been a great loss for the nation if in the name of avoiding "unworthy" competition in politics, Gandhi would have been confined to running a grocery shop. Similarly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was born in an "untouchable" caste, but he played an important role in the drafting of the democratic constitution of independent India. He also taught in a college for some time. To use the terminology of *varna-vyavastha*, he ably performed the work of a *Brahmin*.

Is it possible to imagine how many Ambedkars we may have lost by now owing to the restrictive *varna-vyavastha*?

As we have noted earlier, *varna-vyavastha* is a closed system of social stratification without any scope for upward social mobility. To quote M. Haralambos, author of a textbook on sociology, "A person belongs to his parents jati and automatically follows the occupation of the *jati* into which he was born. Thus no matter what the biologically based aptitude and capacities of an untouchable, there is no way he can become a Brahmin. Unless it is assumed that superior genes are permanently located in the Brahmin caste, and there is no evidence that this is the case, then there is probably no relationship between genetically based and socially created inequality in traditional Hindu society." [85]

Returning to Gandhi, though Gandhi was opposed to untouchability and caste, he did not carry his opposition to its logical conclusion. Inconsistently enough, he continued to support the *varna-vyavastha* based on birth. At one stage, he even supported restrictions on interdining and intermarriage. As he wrote in *Young India* in 1921, "Hinduism does most emphatically discourage interdining and intermarriage between divisions... It is no part of a Hindu's duty to dine with his son. And by restricting his choice of bride to a particular group, he exercises rare self-restraint. **Prohibition against intermarriages and interdining is essential for the rapid evolution of the soul.**" [86] (emphasis mine)

Later Gandhi moved away from these orthodox ideas, and started supporting intercaste marriages. Finally in 1946, he refused to solemnize any marriage at Sevagram Ashram unless one of the parties was an untouchable. [87] May be he would also have given up *varna-vyavastha* if he had lived longer. That, however, is in the realm of imagination, the fact is that Gandhi supported *varna-vyavastha*. It is worth noting that he invented his own conception of *varna-vyavastha*, which, according to him, had nothing to do with the feeling of superiority and inferiority or with prohibition against intermarriage. We find here in Gandhi a quaint mixture of conservatism and reformism.

I would like to dispose of one last objection before concluding this section. One may say that the Hindu law at present is quite different from what Manu desired, and presently Hindus in general do not follow Manu in totality. This is true. The Hindu law at present, for instance, allows inter-caste marriage and prohibits bigamy and child marriage. It permits divorce. It also allows widow remarriage and grants equal rights to daughters in father's property. Nevertheless, there seems to be a gap between the progressive Hindu law and the conservative social practices of the Hindus. A majority of Hindu marriages are still within the caste and very few Hindu women actually claim or get a share in father's property.

The Indian constitution has rightly made special provisions, such as reservations in services for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes, to enable them to enter occupations and positions of power, which had been traditionally denied to them. No doubt, some upper caste liberal Hindus, too, support the policy of reservation. But, by and large, the Hindu upper castes are far from fully reconciled to this progressive step as is evident from violent and aggressive anti-reservation agitation spearheaded by upper caste students from time to time. This kind of reactionary agitation aimed at preserving the present dominance of upper castes in education and the services enjoys considerable support and sympathy in the upper caste dominated media as well as the academia.

On the whole, the Hindu society is yet to fully exorcise the ghost of Manu. Caste based on birth and untouchability still exist in the Hindu society, in spite of the fact that untouchability has been abolished by the Indian constitution. The distribution of education, power and wealth continues to be uneven in the Hindu society, with the *dwijas* being on the top and the *Shudras* and untouchables being at the bottom. Teaching is no more an exclusive preserve of *Brahmins*, but the occupation of Hindu priests is still fully reserved for *Brahmins*, though this fact does not arouse the ire of our fervent anti-reservationists.

## ***Moksha, Karmavada and Avatarvada***

### *Moksha*

is traditionally regarded as the highest end of life in Hindu religion. The "endless cycle of birth and death" is considered a bondage from which one must attain liberation, that is *moksha* or *mukti*.

This whole concept of bondage and liberation is based on the unproved assumption of life after death, and the existence of soul ( *atma*) which continues to exist apart from the body even after death. In the famous words of *Gita*, the soul changes bodies just as human beings change clothes. [\[88\]](#)

Now, there are no good reasons for believing in the existence of soul or life after death or rebirth. These beliefs are not at all supported by incontrovertible scientific evidence. According to S.N. Dasgupta, "there has seldom been before or after Buddha any serious attempt to prove or disprove the doctrine of rebirth. The attempts to prove the doctrine of rebirth in the Hindu philosophical works such as Nyaya, etc. are slight and inadequate." [\[89\]](#)

However, even before Buddha, Lokayat had disproved the existence of soul, life after death, rebirth, heaven and hell on an empirical basis, as these things are never perceived. [\[90\]](#)

Thus, in absence of any evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to believe that **each one of us has got one and only one life** . Once a person is dead, he is dead for ever. Never to be reborn. **Mind, consciousness, memory and life cannot outlast the destruction of brain and body.** This is the harsh truth; howsoever we may dislike it.

The belief in soul seems to have originated from primitive animism. [\[91\]](#) If this belief continues to persist, in spite of total lack of evidence in its support, it is only because of human beings' inability to come to terms with, or to squarely face, the reality of death. One likes to believe that one's near and dear ones, who are dead and finished forever, actually continue to live in some other imaginary world, and that they will also be reborn one day. One draws comfort from the thought that one will not die even after death, and continue to live in some other form. It is paradoxical that, first, the fear of death and love of life makes one readily accept the belief in the immortality and rebirth of soul without adequate evidence, and, then, getting rid of this alleged cycle of birth and death itself becomes the topmost religious aim! [\[92\]](#)

The problem of getting "released" from the alleged cycle of birth and death is a pseudo-problem (in the sense that one is trying to get rid of something which simply does not exist) and *moksha* is an imaginary ideal which has nothing to do with the reality. Instead of running after the imaginary ideal of *moksha*, it is far better to concentrate on improving and living well this one and only life, which we have.

Mimamsa, which is an orthodox Hindu school of thought, considers attainment of heaven ( *swarga*), instead of *moksha*, as the highest end of life. References to heaven and hell are also to be found in the *Manusmriti*. The belief in heaven is fairly widespread at popular level. However, the ideal of the attainment of heaven, too, is based on unproved assumptions, like life after death and the existence of heaven, and, therefore, it cannot be accepted.

Another related doctrine is the Hindu belief in *karmavada* or the so-called law of *karma*. According to this doctrine, every human being gets the

fruits of his actions either in the present or in some future life. Whatever a human being is in his present life is the result of his own actions in the past life or lives.

This, again, is a totally unverified and unverifiable doctrine based on the assumption of the "cycle of birth and death". It is only a convenient tool for explaining away the perceived inequality in human society. The idea of *karma* is found in Buddhism and Jainism as well. However, these religions do not support *varna-vyavastha*. But in Hinduism the doctrine of *karma*, along with the idea of god, has been used for providing ideological support to the unjust *varna-vyavastha* and for making it appear just and fair. In Hinduism the so-called law of *karma* merely serves the purpose of legitimizing the unjust *varna-vyavastha* by making the *Shudras* and the "untouchables" meekly accept their degrading position as a "result of their own deeds" in imaginary past lives, and by assuring them "better" birth in "next life" if they faithfully perform their *varna-dharma* in their present lives. [93] In this way, this doctrine prevents them from revolting against this man-made undemocratic system, which has nothing to do with alleged past and future lives.

Lastly, I come to the Hindu doctrine of *avatarvada*. According to this doctrine, whenever religion is threatened in this world, god takes birth as an *avatar* to put things back into order. Ram and Krishna, for example, are popularly regarded as *avatars* by the Hindus.

Belief in *avatarvada*, too, is logically unjustifiable and merely makes one run away from one's own responsibilities. Instead of making efforts to improve their own condition, those who believe in *avatarvada* keep waiting for an *avatar* to take birth. Since god does not exist, there is no question of his being born on this earth as an *avatar*. (Let me add here that I also do not believe in the truth of statements like "Jesus is the son of god" or "Mohammed is the messenger of god".)

Not only I do not regard Ram or Krishna (or anyone else) as an *avatar* of god, I also do not regard them as ideal personalities. Ram, as mentioned earlier, was an upholder, of the *varna-vyavastha*. His cruel behavior with Sita, after fighting a destructive war with Ravana to get her released, is too well known to need recapitulation. [94]

Krishna, on the other hand, is portrayed in the *Mahabharata* as the teacher of *Bhagvat Gita*, a book which expounds untrue and harmful doctrines like the belief in god and immortal soul, *avatarvada*, *karmavada*, *varnashram dharma* and the doctrine of *moksha*.

In *Mahabharata*

Krishna adopts and advocates adoption of unfair means like lying and deception for achieving one's ends. Obviously, he did not believe in the doctrine of purity of ends and means. There are several flaws in the character of Krishna as portrayed in the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvat* and *Harivamsa*. These have been ably enumerated by Dr. Ambedkar in his *The Riddle of Ram and Krishna*. I refer the interested reader to this work for a fuller treatment of this subject. [95]

## Conclusion

To conclude, I categorically reject major Hindu religious beliefs including the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas, *varnashram dharma*, *moksha*, *karmavada*, and *avatarvada*. I am not an admirer of Ram and Krishna, and I also do not believe in idol worship or the Hindu taboo of not eating beef. I support logical and scientific thinking; and a secular, rational morality based on human values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Therefore, I am not a Hindu by conviction, though I am a Hindu by birth.

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## Endnotes

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (Bombay: Blackie & Son (India) Ltd., 1979), p. 12.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

[4] M.K.Gandhi, "Aspects of Hinduism" in *Hindu Dharma* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1978), p. 9.

[5] Ninian Smart, "Hinduism" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. in chief, Paul Edwards) Vol. IV (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1972), p.1.

[6] S.N.Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp. 67-68.

[7] Chatterjee and Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] S.N.Dasgupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 394.

[11] I have discussed the question of the existence of god in my small Hindi book *Kya Ishwar Mar Chuka Hai?* (Patna: Bihar Buddhiwadi Samaj, 1985, 1995). See, *Is God Dead?* (An introduction to *Kya ishwar mar chuka hai?*) [Patna: Buddhiwadi Foundation, 1998]

[12] M.K.Gandhi, "Aspects of Hinduism" in *Hindu Dharma*, pp. 9-10.

[13] A.L.B., "History of Hinduism" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1981), pp. 910-11.

[14] B.R. Ambedkar, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 4, *Riddles in Hinduism* (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1987), p. 332.

[15] Y.Masih, *The Hindu Religious Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), pp. 192-93.

[16] Bhagvad-Gita I: 40,41, 42,43.

[17] B.G. IV: 13.15.

[18] Y.Masih, Op.Cit., p.208, Also see, pp. 224-25.

[19] V.P.Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1991), pp. 50-51.

[20] Manusmriti (MS) I: 31.

[21] MS I:58.

[22] MS I:88.

[23] MS I:89.

[24] MS I: 90.

[25] MS I: 91.

[26] MS I: 93, Also see, X: 3.

[27] MS I: 95.

[28] MS I: 101.

[29] MS I: 103.

[30] MS II: 10,13.

[31] MS II: 11.

[32] MS VIII: 410.

[33] MS X: 96. Also see, Kautilya, *Arthshastra* I: 3, Quoted by J.N. Farquhar in *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* ( Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 44.

[34] MS II: 135.

[35] MS VIII: 272.

[36] MS VIII: 281.

[\[37\]](#) MS II: 67.

[\[38\]](#) MS V: 154.

[\[39\]](#) MS V: 168,157.

[\[40\]](#) MS IX: 3.

[\[41\]](#) MS IX: 2.

[\[42\]](#) MS V: 147.

[\[43\]](#) MS V: 148.

[\[44\]](#) MS VIII: 379.

[\[45\]](#) MS VIII: 123.

[\[46\]](#) MS VIII: 364.

[\[47\]](#) MS VIII: 366.

[\[48\]](#) MS VIII: 412.

[\[49\]](#) MS VIII: 413.

[\[50\]](#) MS VIII: 268.

[\[51\]](#) MS VIII: 267.

[\[52\]](#) MS XI: 131.

[\[53\]](#) MS II: 31,32.

[\[54\]](#) MS II: 127.

[\[55\]](#) MS III: 111,112.

[\[56\]](#) MS VIII: 88.

[\[57\]](#) MS V: 92.

[58] MS VIII: 142.

[59] MS III: 4.

[60] MS III: 12.

[61] MS III: 14,15,16,17,18,19.

[62] MS X: 4.

[63] MS X: 25.

[64] MS X: 8.

[65] MS X: 12.

[66] Ibid.

[67] MS X: 50,51,52.

[68] MS X: 54,55.

[69] MS X: 53.

[70] MS X: 54.

[71] MS II: 168.

[72] MS VIII: 414.

[73] MS II: 113; X: 1.

[74] MS II: 116.

[75] MS II: 11.

[76] MS IV: 30.

[77] MS III: 65.

[78] MS VIII: 22.

[79] MS III:150, 161; IX: 225. From a humanist point of view, there is nothing wrong in being born as a *Shudra* or a *Chandala*, but in the context of the Manusmriti, these are abusive epithets.

[80] Manusmriti (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1982), pp. 10-11.

[81] A.K.Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p.163.

[82] Y.Masih, *The Hindu Religious Thought*, pp. 336-37.

[83] Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* ( Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1972), p. 265.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

[85] M.Haralambos, *Sociology Themes and Perspectives* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980) pp. 27-28.

[86] N.K.Bose, *Op.Cit.*, p. 266.

[87] Louis Fischer, *Gandhi* (New York: New American Library, 1954), pp. 111-12, Also see, N.K.Bose, *Op.Cit.*, p. 267.

[88] B.G. II: 20-25.

[89] S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* , Vol. I, p. 87.

[90] Chatterjee and Datta. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* .

[91] See M.N.Roy, "The Transmigration of Soul" in *India's Message* ( Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1982), pp. 4-6.

[92]

Probably "the cycle of life and death" is considered "bondage" because it will presumably lead to death again and again. So, primarily the doctrine of liberation seems to be a reaction against death.

[93]

"Those whose conduct has been pleasing will quickly attain a pleasing birth, the birth of a Brahman or a Kshatriya, or a Vaisya; but those whose conduct has been abominable, will quickly attain abominable birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or an Outcaste." Brihadaranyaka, quoted by J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* , p. 34, Also see, S.N.Dasgupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 363.

[94] See, my "Why I do not want Ramrajya" in *Why I am Not a Hindu & Why I do not want Ramrajya* (Patna: Bihar Rationalist Society, 1995).

[95] B.R. Ambedkar, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches* , Vol. 4, *Riddles in Hinduism*.

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